YWCA Canada
National Emergency Survivor Support Fund
2025 Impact Report
Slaight Family Foundation

The Urgent Reality of Gender-Based Violence in Canada

Gender-based violence in Canada remains a national crisis marked by staggering and persistent **rates** of harm and the **numbers** are rising.

- Every **48 hours**, a woman or girl is killed in Canada, and one in every five victims is Indigenous.
- A woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner every **4.2 days**, leaving at least 154 children without mothers in 2024 alone.
- Violence is also a key driver of homelessness: **91% of homeless** women report having survived violence or assault at some point in their lives.
- Despite the urgent need, **more than 1,000 women** are turned away from VAW shelters every day due to capacity limitations (Statistics Canada, 2019), and among those who do secure a temporary bed, one in five ultimately returns to their abuser because they lack the financial means or social supports to remain safe.
- Gender-based violence is the only category of violent crime in Canada that is rising (Anthistle & Arella, 2024), **with family violence increasing by 14%** and intimate partner violence by 19% between 2014 and 2022.
- Early data suggests these numbers did not improve in 2024: Ottawa alone saw **6,636 police-reported cases** of intimate partner violence, and nationally, 186 women and girls were victims of femicide (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability).
- In Ontario, **42 femicides** were confirmed between late November and July 2024, up from 38 during the same period in 2023 (Weingarten, 2024).

These numbers paint a clear picture: financial insecurity and lack of immediate support remain some of the most significant barriers preventing survivors from leaving unsafe situations and rebuilding their lives.

What You Made Possible

Together, we are breaking down the financial barrier survivors face when fleeing domestic violence, easing the pressure on the temporary shelter system, and breaking cycles of abuse against women and gender diverse people. The NESS Fund's impact is multidimensional. We observed a critical impact on survivors and the systems they navigate to reach safety and healing.

1400+ **Survivors of gender based violence helped since 2022.**

90%

of participants credited the financial support provided as the primary reason they were able to leave a violent living situation.

100%

of recipients reported a good experience Communicating with YWCA being comfortable heard and respected.

93%

of recipients reporting that participating in the program improved their sense of safety, confidence and stability.

100%

of participants reporting that accessing program supports was easy, timely and had a positive impact on their lives.

$1,140.00 was the average individual grant provided to survivors.

89% of your investment was given directly to survivors.

310 Survivors were supported by the NESS Fund in 2025.

Top 3 Needs:

1. Rent and security deposits
2. Essential furniture for new homes
3. Utilities set up and utilities arears

Other Needs:

- Moving expenses
- Storage expenses
- Rental arears
- Settlement Services

As a facilitator working directly with survivors...

"...I can confidently say that the National Emergency Survivor Support (NESS) Fund has filled a critical gap in our local response to gender-based violence and housing insecurity.

In moments of crisis, survivors often need immediate, flexible financial support to safely exit unsafe situations. Traditional funding streams are rarely designed to respond with the speed or adaptability required in these circumstances. The NESS Fund has consistently provided timely, survivor-centered assistance that removes financial barriers to safety—supporting essential needs such as emergency housing costs, utilities, transportation, and transition expenses.

In our community, this funding has had measurable impact. Survivors who would otherwise have remained in unsafe environments or experienced prolonged shelter stays were able to move quickly into stable housing. This not only improved individual safety and wellbeing, but also strengthened system flow by reducing pressure on emergency shelters and crisis services. From a service delivery perspective, the Fund has empowered frontline staff and community facilitators to respond effectively and responsibly. The flexible design of the NESS Fund allows supports to be tailored to real-time needs, ensuring funds are used efficiently and with accountability, while maintaining survivor dignity and choice.

Importantly, the NESS Fund has strengthened local partnerships and enhanced coordination across sectors. It supports a prevention-focused approach by intervening early, stabilizing households, and reducing the likelihood of repeat crises—ultimately representing a strong return on investment for funders committed to sustainable, community-level impact."

"Continued investment in the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund is an investment in safety, stability, and systems change. Its impact is clear, its model is effective, and its presence in our community has made a meaningful difference in the lives of survivors when it mattered most."

YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin – Program Coordinator, Empowerment and Life Skills & Housing and Homelessness System Coordinator

In the Words of Survivors

"The unfortunate circumstances of the situation we are in are devastating, but the fund is assisting to help relieve or alleviate the Financial burden that is put on me in restarting over with my son from domestic violence. The fund has assisted, and I am forever grateful."

"My children will benefit in the long run thanks to the help of the program. They will be able to keep a roof over their heads after a year of homelessness and be able to eat, but most importantly, be able to watch me develop the skills needed to regain control over my own mind, body and feelings. It gives women confidence that it does end without spiralling out of control, falling back to the abuser."

" The funds gave my children and me the comfort, security and stability we needed to settle in our new environment. I am overwhelmed and thankful for this support. "

"Without this fund, there would have been very little chance for me to secure a safe spot for my kids and me to escape abuse. I am very grateful."

"Just knowing this support is available to women is truly life-changing."

2025 Recipients of the NESS Fund

National Spotlight

The National Emergency Survivor Support (NESS) Fund has also gained meaningful visibility through national public platforms and media, helping to build broad awareness of survivor-centred, low-barrier financial support across Canada.

THE WALRUS TALKS ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

YWCA Canada joined activists, advocates, and experts in a public conversation about the realities of gender-based violence and the urgent need for more responsive supports. With opening remarks from the Honourable Rechie Valdez, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), the event centred on lived experience and community-based solutions. Our CEO, Aline Nizigama, used this moment to introduce audiences to YWCA Canada's programs and services that impact women, girls and their family accross the country. We also shared our Rose Campaign video, a powerful reminder that gender-based violence ends, when we all begin. The full discussion was recorded and is available on The Walrus Talks' YouTube channel, extending the reach of the NESS Fund well beyond the room.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW YORK

While the Slaight Family Foundation's funding flowed directly to survivors, its impact extended far beyond individual households. The NESS Fund has become a powerful evidence base for YWCA Canada's advocacy and policy work. The insights generated through this program now inform our conversations with government, our pre-budget submissions, and our meetings with Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) on the importance of flexible, survivor-centred financial supports. Real-world data from the NESS Fund allows us to demonstrate, credibly and concretely, that cash-based interventions are not only compassionate but effective tools to prevent violence, support exits from abuse, and advance women's economic security.

This learning has also shaped our international advocacy. During the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, YWCA Canada hosted a parallel event within the NGO CSW Forum to share insights from the NESS Fund with a global audience. The room was filled with members of the global YWCA movement, international activists, organizational leaders, and Canadian officials. The discussion sparked exchanges about similar initiatives in other countries and the growing recognition of cash programs as a gender equality strategy. Canadian MPs Leah Taylor Roy and Andréanne Larouche highlighted the significance of initiatives like the NESS Fund and underscored the importance of women's representation in political decision-making to advance gender equity in Canada.

A Two-Tiered Approach to Safety and Stability

TIER 1 → NATIONAL EMERGENCY SURVIVOR SUPPORT FUND NESSFUND FONDS NATIONAL D'URGENCE POUR SURVIVANTES

Crisis grants and wraparound supports for survivors fleeing violence.

TIER 2 → HOUSING HEALS

Support for survivors transitioning into more stable housing, including both financial aid and personalized services.

This tiered model reflects YWCA Canada's commitment to addressing the continuum of survivors' needs, in the face of both rising gender-based violence and Canada's deepening housing crisis.

YWCA Canada is proud to launch Housing Heals, a new national program designed to support women and gender diverse people fleeing violence as they transition from emergency shelter to safe, stable housing.

This initiative builds on the success of the National Emergency Survivor Support (NESS) Fund, which provides immediate crisis grants to help survivors escape unsafe situations.

Together, NESS and Housing Heals form a two-tiered national response to gender-based violence, from urgent safety to long-term stability.

This new tiered model reflects YWCA Canada's flexibility and ability to respond to emerging issues as we confront rising rates of gender-based violence and shelter shortages across Canada. As needs change, so will YWCAs response, nationally and locally.

Mr. Slaight and The Slaight Family Foundation,

January 2026

On behalf of YWCA Canada, we are deeply grateful for your extraordinary commitment as we conclude our four-year partnership through the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund. Your investment has made a profound and lasting difference across our federation and in the lives of more than 1,400 survivors of gender-based violence.

Since 2022, your support has enabled YWCA Canada to create and sustain one of the only national emergency funds of its kind: flexible, rapid, survivor-centred, and rooted in trust. This year alone, the NESS Fund reached 310 women & gender-diverse survivors in 12 communities across Canada.

Your trust in our organization translated into safety, dignity, and hope for hundreds of women & gender-diverse people. Few investments have such an immediate, tangible, life-saving impact. This is truly a life-saving measure, and its significance cannot be overstated.

As we conclude our four-year funding partnership with The Slaight Family Foundation, we remain deeply committed to sustaining and strengthening the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund. This program has become a lifeline for survivors across Canada, and we will continue to advance its future through national fundraising efforts, renewed engagement with donors, and ongoing collaboration with corporate partners and family foundations.

We would be thrilled to continue this work with The Slaight Family Foundation and invite you to an exploratory conversation or renewal of your investment in this program at anytime.

Together, we can continue to help build stronger, more resilient communities where women and gender-diverse survivors can access immediate, flexible support at moments of crisis and rebuild their lives.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to The Slaight Family Foundation for your exceptional leadership, trust in the YWCA Movement and generosity.

Aline Nizigama (she/her)
National CEO, YWCA Canada

If you have any additional questions that were not addressed in this report, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are happy to provide further information or discuss any aspects of the NESS Fund with you.

On Behalf of YWCA Canada, Thank You.

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